

A

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, November 30. 1708.

I Am upon the great Subject of uniting among our selves ; I have been telling you of three great Affairs upon our Hands, which shoud move us to it—— The War, the Succession, and the Union ; and a large Field this gives us of Argument to prove the Necessity of Uniting at this Time.

But before I enter upon this, let me note a Step the Parliament has already made to this Work, and from whence we may be encourag'd to hope, the Spirit of Uniting is upon them, their Eyes open to the Necessity of it, and their Thoughts bent to pursue it ; and this is in the late Vote against deciding the controverted Elections by Ballot.

I know, a great many good Men have been of the Opinion, that Voting by Ballot

would be the fairest Method in all our publick Affairs, and much has been spoken on that Head already, as an Antidote against universal Partiality, and the great Contagion of Bribery, that has too far spread over this Nation ; and I have been sometimes of that Mind too—— But I cannot but fall in with the general Opinion in the Affair before us, that AT THIS TIME, and *as Things are now circumstanced*, it could not but be a Method very unacceptable to the People of England as to Affairs of Parliament—— Were all our Representatives equally careful of, or equally knowing in the true Interest of their Country, for whom they serve ; there might be something more to be said for this Affair, as to its being a true Preservative, *as above*——

But

But while Members of Parliament are *Men* and not *Angels*— While they that choose them are honest Men not Conjurers, the preserving the Knowledge of the Behaviour of our Members of Parliament to the Persons that choose them, that they may justify their Choice already past, and know how to choose for Time to come, seems to me a very necessary Thing.

And pray, let me ask you, Gentlemen, had the Tacking the Occasional Bill been voted by Ballot, how had you come to the Knowledge of the famous 134, how had you known them by Name, or how had the Country known to throw so many of them out as they did; how had we learnt to mark their Conduct, and how had we distinguished them from our Friends? — Again, how had we known our Friends in that important Affair, how had we learnt to value them for their Diligence and Vigour, in opposing that fatal Project, and consequently known them again in our ensuing Elections, by which means we obtain'd a Parliament the next Time of quite differing People, and carry'd the Election of Speaker against the *High-Fliers* by a Majority of above 50?

Thus Merit is known to be rewarded, and K.... y is known to be mark'd and avoided, by seeing how our Representatives vote, how they act in the great Trust repos'd in them, and how they discharge their Duty. If this be prevented, we may some time or other come to be ruin'd, and never know who hurt us; we may have a *Judas* among the 12, and never be able to mark him out.

It has always been the Method of our honest Members of Parliament, at least ever since Liberty was restor'd by the Revolution, to act above-board, and to let those that choose them know their Conduct, that they may not be ashamed to go home again, and that their Fidelity to their Country might recommend them to their Choice again. This was one Reason, why the Votes were printed, which was not done in former Reigns; and when the first Motion was made in the *House of Commons* for printing the Votes, and it was oppos'd by a certain Man of Arbitrary Blood, as an Appeal to

the People, and below the Dignity of the *House*; he was answer'd very aptly by a known Afferter of the People's Liberties, That it was a Duty to the People they represented, to let them know what they were doing for them; that it was the People's Work, and ought not to be conceal'd from them, and that it was below the Dignity of the *House of Commons* to conceal their Actions from the World, as if they were either afraid or ashamed of them; and that Actions conceal'd were liable to be misrepresent'd, but what was made publick and avow'd could not be so.

The very same Arguments hold good here; for as it is below the Dignity of the *House* to conceal their Actions, as if they were afraid or ashamed of them, so it is below the Dignity of a Representative or Member of that Honourable Assembly to conceal his Name, or to vote so, as he should be afraid or ashamed his Country should know it; again, while we know no Body, we suspect every Body, and shall be subject to make Misconstructions upon Suspicion; so when any Thing passes that we think injurious (if that can be) we shall suspect our Friends, because we do not know our Enemies — In short, it would create an universal Distrust of our Representatives, and leave us absolutely in the dark, how to judge either of Persons or Things.

All these Things consider'd, I think, we have Reason to thank GOD and the Parliament, that this Affair is shock'd in its Infancy; and 'tis more a Wonder to me, that the *House* divided upon it, than that they carry'd it at all; for to me it seem'd strange, there should be any Body left of a contrary Judgment. I will not presume to suggest, that any Man in the Honourable Assembly of a *British Parliament* shall act against his Judgment, or vote for a Party against Principle — Nature, we have been told, may rebel against Principle, and such a Man may yet be an honest Man; but when Interest prevails upon Principle, the honest Man is metamorphos'd into a Traitor, the Disciple turns a *Judas*, the Purse-Bearer turns Thief, and Betraying of Trust, Family, Religion, and Country follows of Course.

GOD forbid that I should suggest, there are any Men in the present Great Council of the Nation, who are bought and sold for Parties, and who sacrifice their Country's Safety to their single or separated Interests; who dare to act against Principle, or who are capable of betraying the Liberties of Britain. But on the other hand, GOD forbid I should say, there ever was or will be any Assembly of infallible Men met together, I mean in Britain, let them be Parliaments, Convocations, general Assemblies, or what Sort of publick Bodies they please; MAN and INFALLIBLE are Contradictions in Nature: 'Tis generally taken for Nonsense to say a Mortal Man, because there is no such Thing as an Immortal Man; Mortallity is a necessary Adjunct of Nature, and so is Fallibility. If any Man in Flattery to our Parliament would compliment them with the Title of Infallibility, they abuse the Parliament, and give them a Title they know better than to pretend to; in their assembled State, as well as in their separate State, are subject to Mistakes, capable of acting contrary to the true Nature of their Constitution, capable of abusing their Trust, betraying their Country, tyranoizing over the Liberties of the People, ruining those, they are sent thither to defend, and in short, of all the most fatal Errors that can be suggested—Pray mark it, for I will not be misconstrued here, I will not leave Room for a Possibility of it; I say as Men, they are capable of Error, capable of Mistake, capable of abusing their Trust, and capable of all Manner of Corruption.

I am content to say, they are the best constituted Body of Men in the World, the least subject to Corruption, the wisest in Management, the wariest in resolving, *I don't say the calmest in arguing*, in the World. I am content to admit all the Compliments, that Men in Fear of their Power, and fawning upon their Out sides, give them as far they consist with Reason; but let that Naiveous Flattery please those that make it, and betray their pusillanimous and impertinent Fears. This Paper shall never flatter Men for their Power, or pay Homage to

Greatness for Fear of Resentment; They are our Safety, the last Refuge of our Liberties, the Expositors of our Laws, and the Foundation under GOD of our general Prosperity as a Nation. But they are Men and not GODS, Men and not Monsters, and to be Men, implies Mortal, fallible, subjected to Infirmitiy, and subjected to Crime.

And what is the Meaning of all this? But that while they are acting for us, and our Prosperity or Destruction depends upon the Result of their Councils; while we are to single the Men to compose this Body, out of the best, ripest, ablest, wisest and wealthiest of our Gentry, their Actions should be conspicuous, their Behaviour plac'd in our View; that when they discharge their Duty, we may honour them, and when not, may learn to know them, and may mark them out against the Time, when we shall have Occasion to remember Things, and when we come to judge, who is fit to serve again, and who not.

And this is my Reason, why I think, the present Parliament has done both wisely and honourably, in altering the Order of the House made last Parliament, about deciding the Controverted Elections by Ballot. 'Tis Honourable, in that they let the Nation see, they are not afraid to make the whole Island-Witnesses of their Conduct, not ashamed to let all their Actions be known, and their Names known to them; he is most likely to act honestly that acts openly; Truth covets Witnesses, Intrigue and Party-Plot seeks Covers and Concealments. As to the Subject of Bribery, I shall always be with the first to applaud the detecting them, and exposing all Sorts of Corruption—But I cannot but recommend it to our worthy Members to find Methods for it, less subject to Exception, less hazardous to the general Quiet, and less tending to the Prejudice of the People who are represented.

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†† She lives at the *Golden-Ball* in *Hand-Court*, over against great *Turnstile* in *Holborn*.